



PERSONAL SERVICES QUESTIONS – 2007 SESSION

1. Has the agency implemented a broadband pay plan, agency-wide or for selected jobs? If so, when was it implemented and what were the estimated cost increases in the year of implementation? How were these costs funded (by holding vacant positions open, appropriations for other purposes that were unexpended, etc)?

Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) implemented the Broadband Pay Plan department-wide in May 2000 with guidance from the Department of Administration. The cost to transition was \$850,000 redirected from operations and vacancy savings. The department asked the 2001 Legislature for reductions in our base-operating budget equal to the cost of the alternative pay plan. These adjustments were approved, so the additional personal services costs were offset by reduced operating budgets.

2. At what percentage of market are new employees paid? How do employees progress to the market rate for their position? What is the agency's target percent of market? What is the agency average percent of market in FY 2006?
 - FWP uses the market rates established by the Department of Administration.
 - New employees are paid 80% of market at entry unless they bring qualifications above and beyond the position's minimum qualifications.
 - At this time, there is no standardized progression model used department-wide for moving to market. Progression to market is based on legislative pay adjustments and market adjustments based on supervisors' recommendations and documented employee performance.
 - FWP's target percent of market is 100%.
 - The average percent of market for FWP employees is 91% using 2004 market data. Many state agencies have already adopted the 2006 data; FWP will adopt 2006 market data after spring union negotiations at which time virtually all employees' pay will drop to a lower percent of market.
3. Did the agency have vacant positions for a significant portion (6 months or more) of FY 2006? If yes, how many and why were these vacant? How did the vacancies impact agency operations?

These positions were vacant for 6 months or more based on the SABHRS report, MT Vacant Position History. They are full-time or partial FTE. Most are seasonal FTE.

Information Services

11807 – Computer Programmer – This position was vacant more than 6 months for 3 reasons: 1) Vacancy savings targets had to be met, 2) During the reorganization which created the Information Services Division, we held off hiring until we could determine optimal use of the position, and 3) When we initiated recruitment, we had to advertise twice before finding a qualified applicant. The position is currently filled. The impact of the delay in hiring was delays in meeting some agency programming needs until the position was filled.

Fisheries

13145 – Conservation Tech – We prepared a hiring plan and advertisement to hire in time for the spring field season. The selected candidate needed time to finish tasks in his former position before transferring to this position, which resulted in a delay in filling this position. Essential workload was shifted temporarily to other positions; some tasks were delayed. The position has been occupied since July 2006.

13607 – Conservation Tech – Vacancies occurred simultaneously in both this position and its supervisor's position. Recruitment of both was delayed while we re-evaluated and reorganized the pallid sturgeon program using these two positions. We subsequently filled the supervisor's position first so the new supervisor could participate in hiring for this position. This position will be filled in time for the spring field season. The impact was a one-year delay in fulfilling contract obligations with WAPA.

13827 – Conservation Tech – This position is funded with State Wildlife Grants. It took longer than anticipated to get the grant in place, re-write the job profile, and complete the hiring process. The impact was a delay in initiation of the project. The position is currently filled.

13910 – Fish Culture Specialist – The incumbent died unexpectedly and the position was held vacant pending the outcome of negotiations with the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) regarding the proposed purchase of our Arlee Hatchery. During this period short-term workers were hired to perform essential tasks. FWP and the CSKT did not reach agreement on a sale of the hatchery. The position is currently advertised and will be filled within one month.

Enforcement

14823 – FWP Warden – The FTE for this position was transferred from Parks to Enforcement to hire a Recreation Warden. Recruitment was delayed to hold a position open, pending outcome of an unrelated grievance. Impact was reduced law enforcement presence at Fishing Access Sites and Parks during 2006. The grievance was resolved in the state's favor and the position was subsequently filled; it remains occupied.

Seasonal /Modified Positions

These positions are hired to perform summer work at our state parks and fishing access sites or other seasonal activities that are required. They are typically assigned less than 0.50 FTE. After the 3-5 months of work is completed and the FTE is used, the positions become vacant until next season. The positions are critical to accomplishing our agency's mission.

28803 – Management and Finance Division – Human Resource Assistant – 0.33 FTE – seasonal Intern Coordinator – Position works during peak season setting up contracts and recruiting and selecting of Interns during the school season.

26408 – Park Ranger – summer parks work

26542 – Park Ranger – summer parks work – Student—3 seasons, resigned for permanent job

26704 – Park Maintenance Worker – summer parks work – Student – left work for school, Makoshika

36117 – Park Ranger – summer parks work – long-time seasonal – works at FAS – Wildhorse Island

46221 – Park Maintenance Worker – summer parks work – Student left for school – Lost Creek

76422 – Park Groundskeeper – summer parks work

76425 – Park Ranger – summer parks work

96308 – Park Maintenance Worker – summer parks work – long-time seasonal, regional maintenance, FAS work, usually one employee in this position.

25407 – Wildlife Maintenance Worker – seasonal maintenance work (WMA)

25852 – Wildlife Biological Lab Tech – seasonal lab work

25857 – Wildlife Biological Lab Tech – seasonal lab work

35810 – Wildlife Biologist – Modified FTE. Project was temporarily interrupted; we received additional contract money to continue the project. The position is currently filled.

23311 – Fisheries Conservation Tech - This is .17 FTE that is used for part-time temporary summer field help. It is typically all used during May, June, July and August, and then is unoccupied for the rest of the year.

23990 – Fisheries Conservation Tech – Injured worker quit job. Worker's Comp issue delayed the rehiring. The position has been occupied since the summer of 2006.

33311 – Fisheries Conservation Tech – Modified FTE – seasonal work

33831 – Fisheries Conservation Aide – Modified FTE – seasonal work

33832 – Fisheries Conservation Aide – Modified FTE – seasonal work

43120 – Fisheries Conservation Aide – Modified FTE –Project completed – position no longer needed

73826 – Fisheries Computer Programmer – Modified FTE –Project completed – no longer needed

28816/28817 – Wildlife Education Center positions – These positions (0.90 FTE) will remain vacant pending completion of the education center.

4. Did the agency have authorized pay exceptions for pay plan 60 positions? If yes, why?

Fish, Wildlife & Parks has not been in Pay Plan 60 since 2000.

5. Did the agency have authorized position upgrades or downgrades for pay plan 60 positions? If yes, why?

Fish, Wildlife & Parks has not been in Pay Plan since 2000.

6. What challenges does the agency face in recruiting and retaining staff? What actions has the agency taken to address recruitment and retention issues? Is the agency competing with other state agencies or the public sector for staff?

Due to the drop in job applicants applying for FWP jobs, in 1998 FWP implemented a new policy to make all job openings open to the public over the Internet and through other advertisements. Our policy does not allow internal recruitment unless required under a collective bargaining agreement or other unique exception as defined in policy and approved by the Director.

In 2006, FWPs turnover rate was 10.7%, slightly less than Montana State Government as a whole. Initially, moving to the Broadband Pay Plan helped in our recruiting efforts. However, Montana continues to pay less than most of the lower 48 states. Pay plan 20 helps when hiring new people based on their qualifications, which often results in hiring above entry pay. Having the ability to provide strategic pay adjustments based on retention has also helped.

FWP is competing with the federal government for professional resource occupations. Other state agencies, like Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) who hire all new employees at 96% of market regardless of their qualifications, is a competitor for some positions. We have lost an Engineer to MDT for equal work with more pay. Three accounting/budgeting employees and one biology/environmental employee left to work for MDT, but it is unclear whether they left for more responsibility and more money or just more money. We have lost two information technology employees to the Department of Administration, ITSD in the last year. FWP uses market data from the Department of Administration's 2004 survey data. We have not yet adopted 2006 data.

Additionally, hourly wages for entry-level park maintenance and other positions is lower than many private sector employers including fast food or other small businesses. Park positions require working weekends and holidays under adverse conditions, long distances from town. Recruitment of staff is very challenging and requires frequent Strategic Pay Exceptions based on the difficulty in hiring qualified staff.

7. Are agency staff members represented by collective bargaining units? How many of the agency staff are impacted by collective bargaining unit agreements? What provisions are included in bargaining unit agreements? How often are these agreements negotiated?

FWP has two collective bargaining units representing about 170 employees (25% of the agency). FWP's broadband pay plan guidelines are referenced in both collective bargaining agreements and these contracts are negotiated every odd numbered year (two-year agreements). FWP's two current contracts expire 6/30/07. The Game Warden agreement has an MOU where management and the union must form an advisory committee to "study performance incentives, accountability, market sources, overtime, funding opportunities and other opportunities for making warden career pay more competitive to enhance recruitment and retention of its members." The committee has met once and is working on first updating Job Profiles.